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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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A-771
NO.

SECRET LIMDIS

HANDLING INDICATOR

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TO : Department of State

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY: ANALYSIS BRANCH DATE 11/21/82
DATE: June 22, 1967
RDS or XDS EXT. DATE
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ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS
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FROM : Amembassy SAIGON

SUBJECT : U.S. Policy Regarding Coming National Elections in Viet-Nam

REF :

LIMDIS

1. On June 5 the Mission Council approved a statement of general policy on the activities of U.S. agencies and officials prior to and during the coming Viet-Nam national elections. In implementation of the Mission Council policy statement, guidance is being issued to U.S. agencies and personnel in Saigon and in the field. The initial guidance deals with equal access to information media and the provision of air transportation to candidates, and includes a brief statement of the Mission Council's basic policy. Additional guidance will be issued prior to the actual campaign, covering the conduct of U.S. personnel, transportation during August (the month of active campaigning), and other matters of importance.

2. Five copies of the Mission Council policy statement, and five copies of the initial guidance are enclosed. (two only for CINCPAC).

Attachment:

As cited

BUNKER sign unsigned copy

Action Taken

Group 1

Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

Action Officer Symbol

Name of Officer

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FORM 4-62 DS-323

Drafted by: POL:DCFerguson:ju:6/22/67

Contents and Classification Approved by: EUR:JACalhoun

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A-771 Encl. 1 #1 2

SECRET

June 4, 1967

SECRET

LIMDIS - MISSION COUNCIL ONLY

MEMORANDUM FOR: MISSION COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: Mission Coordinator

SUBJECT: US Policy regarding Coming National Elections in Viet-Nam: Mission Council Briefing, Monday, June 5

REFERENCE:
1) Mission Council Action Memorandum, same subject.
2) My Memo, same subject, June 3, 1967

Transmitted herewith is a general policy statement regarding the elections. This paper is for Mission Council use only, in support of the briefing to be given on Monday, June 5.

Enclosure:
General Policy Statement (LIMDIS)

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LIMDIS - FOR MEMBERS OF MISSION COUNCIL ONLY

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SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Regarding National Election Campaign - 1967

1. United States Policy: The policy of the United States is not to support any individual party or any specific candidate for office during the coming elections in Viet-Nam. It is our purpose to be absolutely impartial and do all we can to see to it that the national elections are conducted by the Government of Viet-Nam as fairly, honorably and impartially as possible. It is our policy to provide the Vietnamese with all appropriate advice and assistance to this end.

2. The Problem:

a) Our credibility - It is widely believed that the United States does support a candidate for president. It is difficult for most Vietnamese to accept the fact that with our enormous stake in Viet-Nam we have not made a choice.

b) The Incumbent's Advantage - The incumbent always enjoys a significant advantage in an election contest. In Viet-Nam this advantage is overwhelming. All air transport and communications media are under close GVN supervision. Many parts of the country are virtually inaccessible except by air. Officials from the top to the bottom of the bureaucratic hierarchy -- most of whom in important positions are military officers -- respond to their superiors and have no tradition of a civil service separate from politics. The fact that the leading candidate for president is also Prime Minister and a military officer of high rank gives him a campaign advantage over his opposition so great that many Vietnamese do not believe that there can be a fair election.

c) The failure of the GVN to take measures to assure declared and potential candidates that it will take all practicable measures to equalize opportunity among the candidates with respect to transportation and equal use of information media facilities, combined with continuation of a harsh program of press censorship directed against all except the GVN candidate, have served to convince many that there is no reason to expect a free election or even any possibility of waging an effective campaign.

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3. Potential for U.S. Action:

There are measures we can and should take to deal with these problems:

a) Credibility: With respect to the credibility of the U.S. position, we must continue to take advantage of all opportunities to explain our position to the GVN leaders and to responsible Vietnamese in both public and private life. We should emphasize the great importance to Viet-Nam, both domestically and in its foreign relations, of absolutely free and honest elections. We must explain that this is why the United States believes it essential that it remain completely neutral with respect to the candidates. We must play this same theme in our media output to the Vietnamese people. Widespread understanding of the U.S. position should itself help bring pressure on the GVN to measure up to its responsibilities with respect to the elections.

b) It is difficult to equalize the opportunities enjoyed by the other candidates with those enjoyed by an incumbent in high office such as the Prime Minister (or the Chief of State if he runs). Nevertheless, much can be done in this regard and our efforts must be directed toward seeking to influence the GVN through advice, counsel, and judicious pressure to afford adequate moral, technical and financial support to all candidates in the campaign on an equal basis. It may be necessary, as in the case of transportation, for the United States to go farther and to offer actual assistance in use of US equipment and facilities -- but always through the GVN and within the framework of equal availability to all candidates.

Should we do this or only suggest AVN or VNAF A/C used in the campaign?

Chapter Four, Articles 18, 19 and 20 of the Presidential Election Law, which is now being studied by the Directorate and will be promulgated soon, provides for a Central Election Campaign Committee to be established by July 21. This Committee is charged with overseeing the campaign and insuring that it is conducted impartially. Once it is established, this Committee will be a useful point of contact and coordination.

How directly should we get involved with this group?

4. Courses of Action:

Personal contact and appropriate official advice are the most effective means available to us to persuade the GVN to take the necessary

measures to assure fair and impartial elections. We must constantly stress the importance of elections which freely and honestly express the will of the people and our readiness to assist the GVN to achieve such elections. This should be done at the highest levels in the Mission and by our representatives in the field. The guidance which the Mission Election Coordinating Committee will shortly prepare for field personnel will include instructions to this effect. This point must be mad firmly with counterparts at all levels, including Corps and Province.

Of particular importance, of course, are the top-level discussions with key GVN officials. We would hope that these discussions would be productive of positive action, and that the GVN would publicly declare its intention to equalize opportunity for candidates and the actual measures it plans to take. Regardless of the degree to which the GVN may be forthcoming, however, we feel that we should also let the candidates know informally what U.S. policy is and our desire and efforts to assure fair and honest elections. We should let the GVN know we will be passing this information to the candidates -- it might create some additional pressure on the GVN to take appropriate measures.

The following are substantive areas which should be of particular concern and recommendations for action:

a) Censorship: Censorship must be reduced to a minimum consistent with national security. Whenever evidence comes to the attention of the Mission that censorship is being used to hamper the legitimate campaign activities of any candidate, we should quietly but firmly protest. We are faced with such a situation now. Press censorship at the moment is fairly flagrant. Material concerning candidates other than the Prime Minister rarely appears and when it does it is usually incomplete or distorted.

b) Newsprint: The GVN uses the distribution of newsprint as a means to control the Press. This is not so much a matter of a shortage of newsprint but rather of access to it. Where possible, we should exert our influence to see that the GVN does not employ this device to limit legitimate expression of opinion. The Election Coordinating Committee has requested JUSPAO and USAID to provide whatever information is at their disposal concerning newsprint, its availability and distribution in Vietnam.

c) Equal Access to Information Media: A detailed guideline statement has been prepared by the Committee and copies circulated to the Mission Council. In addition to preparation of this paper, the Committee has made a copy of the French Law on "Equal Time" available to members of the Constituent Assembly and plans to make a copy available to MICH. The Committee has also requested our Embassies in several other countries to send us copies of their host government laws or regulations on this subject. It would be our plan also to distribute these to the Constituent Assembly and to MICH. An effort should be made at all levels to urge the GVN to put such laws or technical provisions into effect here and widely publicize them. At present the draft presidential election law provides for "equal time" but only in general terms. It would be inadvisable to make time available to candidates over AFRTV although this may be suggested by the Vietnamese.

d) Transportation: Detailed guidelines on this subject have also been distributed separately to the Mission Council. The present guidelines cover the period only up until the beginning of the official campaign period about August 1. MACV and CORDS have undertaken a study of the problem as it will exist during the actual campaign period. Their preliminary findings are at present under study by the Election Coordinating Committee and it is hoped that recommendations may be forthcoming in about two weeks.

e) Special Transportation Considerations with Respect to the Prime Minister: An immediate problem is now before the Mission in connection with Prime Minister Ky's travels between now and the campaign period. He has used American helicopters on trips which have been of an overtly political nature, and he can be expected to try to do so again. While Prime Minister Ky continues to hold his high position, and before the campaign period begins, it will be difficult for the Mission to refuse him those facilities which he has been enjoying. However, the Committee recommends that the problem should be brought to the Prime Minister's attention in such a way that he will understand that we prefer that he not use US aircraft for campaign purposes, other than to the extent they may be made available to all candidates.

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Saigon A-771
Enclosure 2

CONFIDENTIAL

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
APO 96222

DECLASSIFIED

MACCOC11 16 June 1967

SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Prior to and During Vietnamese Presidential Election Campaign (U)

TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. (U) The purpose of this letter is to disseminate the policy governing activities of U.S. agencies and officials prior to and during the 1967 Vietnamese presidential election campaign. The policy as set forth herein was approved and promulgated by the Mission Council.

2. (C) It shall be the policy of U.S. agencies and officials not to support any individual or party. U.S. agencies and officials will remain impartial and do all possible to see to it that the elections are conducted by the Government of Vietnam as fairly, honestly and impartially as possible. To this end it will be the U.S. policy to provide the Vietnamese with all appropriate advice and assistance.

3. (C) The attached inclosures are detailed policy statements dealing with air transportation for presidential candidates and equal access to media for them. As these statements deserve priority attention in the period immediately ahead specific guidance is being issued now. General guidelines will be promulgated in the near future outlining the general United States posture during the campaign and election period.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

L. Walter T Kerwin Jr

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as

WALTER T. KERWIN JR.
Major General, USA
Chief of Staff

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U.S. POLICY REGARDING PROVISION OF AIR TRANSPORTATION TO CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENT PRIOR TO AND DURING CAMPAIGN PERIOD

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1. (C) There are three basic principles which govern the position of the U.S. Mission with respect to transporting candidates for the presidency:

a. The U.S. Mission will encourage the GVN to use its own transportation facilities to the maximum to afford adequate transportation and equal opportunities to all candidates during the official campaign period.

b. U.S. transportation facilities will be available to relieve GVN aircraft of certain missions in order to support the GVN in enabling it to make such transportation available during the official campaign period.

c. U.S. aircraft will not be used for the transportation of candidates on overtly political trips at any time. (Exceptions will be made only on the specific approval of the Ambassador.) In no case will candidates fly in American aircraft while on an announced campaign trip.

2. (C) There are three distinct phases into which the time between now and the election period can be broken down. These are:

a. The period from now to about July 1, the date on which the candidates formally file their candidacy.

b. The period from about July 1 to August 1 in which the candidates have been officially proclaimed as such but no campaigning is permitted, and

c. The official campaign period, from August 1 to the elections in September.

3. (C) Our policy in providing transportation will vary to some extent in these different phases:

a. Until the formal filing date, expected to be about July 1, no announced candidate or member of his political entourage will be transported in American aircraft if the purpose of the trip is overtly political.

b. From about July 1 until August 1, no candidate or member of his political entourage will be transported in American aircraft or his travel otherwise facilitated in order to campaign. If the purpose of the trip appears to be overtly political but some other justification is given, the request is to be referred to the Ambassador in accordance with paragraphs 4b and 5 below.

c. During the official campaign period from August 1 until the elections, the GVN will be urged to afford to the maximum extent transportation to all candidates on an equal basis. Where necessary, American

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aircraft will be used to release GVN aircraft for this purpose. In no cases will candidates fly in American aircraft to campaign.

4. (C) Special Considerations: The United States, as a matter of course, from time to time, affords transportation to various high-ranking Vietnamese, some of whom will be presidential candidates. These include Prime Minister Ky; Chairman of the Constituent Assembly, Phan Khac Suu; and, should he declare his candidacy, General Thieu would also fall in this category. In the event transportation requests are received for them, the GVN will be urged to use its own facilities to the greatest possible extent.

a. Where the GVN appears unable to provide sufficient transport and where there is a clear military justification for the trip (in the case of Ky or Thieu) or Constituent Assembly business to be conducted (in the case of Suu), then U.S. assets may be made available.

b. If the trip appears to have as its primary purpose the exercise of the normal civil functions of the office of the Prime Minister or the Chief of State, but for which there is no clear military justification, then the GVN must be urged to use its own assets. Where the GVN appears unable to provide sufficient transport, consideration may be given to the use of U.S. transport but clearance for use of the aircraft must be obtained from the Ambassador in accordance with procedures outlined in paragraph 5 below.

c. If requests are received for a trip which appears to be largely for campaign purposes, but which may have as its ostensible justification the normal business of the office of Prime Minister or Chief of State, the request will be refused.

d. In the event a request is received to use JUSPAO aircraft to transport journalists to accompany a campaign-oriented trip, or to assist in a trip largely of a political nature, the request will be refused.

5. (C) Procedures: The evaluation of the nature of each trip is the initial responsibility of the senior American official, civilian or military, locally involved. It is recognized that there will be occasions when the distinction between trips as described in 4b and 4c above will not be easy to make. In any case where a request is referred to the Ambassador, the fullest possible information regarding the trip must accompany the referral. This should include insofar as possible the names, positions (official or otherwise) of the passengers, destination and times of the trip, and the official reason for the trip. In addition, the American official referring the request must include his own judgement of the true purpose for the trip and any other considerations he may feel will aid the Ambassador in reaching a decision in the best interests of the United States.

a. Channels for referring requests for transportation in

accordance with the considerations noted above will be those of the agency concerned, i.e., MACV Advisors and other military commanders will refer the request through their own channels to Headquarters MACV Saigon. American civilian officials who may have cause to refer such requests will use the most expedient means of communication available to contact their parent agency in Saigon. In Saigon, the Ambassador's designated representative who will have initial action in these matters will be the Minister Counselor for Political Affairs.

b. The U.S. Mission is currently considering means of assisting the GVN to provide equal transportation to candidates during the election campaign period in August (paragraphs 1b and 3c above). Further guidance will be forthcoming on this matter.

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U.S. POLICY REGARDING EQUAL ACCESS TO INFORMATION MEDIA FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

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1. (C) All presidential candidates to the maximum extent possible should enjoy equal access to information media during the coming campaign. Vernacular information media in Vietnam are all more or less closely controlled by the GVN: therefore, it is the responsibility of the GVN to ensure equal access. We should on appropriate occasions encourage the GVN to afford this equal access, and to publicize that it is doing so.

2. (C) The draft Presidential Election Law now under consideration provides for the establishment of a Central Election Campaign Committee. This Committee is charged with ensuring that "all candidates will receive equal facilities in the election campaign," (Article 20, Chapter Four), and very specifically with assuring the extension of "equal time" to all candidates in the utilization of radio and television (Article 20(6)). We should urge the GVN to cooperate closely with this Committee to assure implementation of these provisions.

3. (C) The mission has acquired the laws and regulations of a number of countries dealing with equal access to information media for candidates. This material has been provided the Constituent Assembly Secretariat where it is available for reference. If we are queried on technical problems which may arise in affording equal time, we should be prepared to provide appropriate advice and can point out the availability of this material.

4. (C) Other than the extensive facilities of AFRTV (to which no access will be allowed for campaign purposes), the information media over which we exert the greatest degree of control are provincial newspapers. These are frequently edited and to some extent actually written by Assistant Province Representatives for psychological operations in the field. While these field representatives should participate in no partisan campaign activities whatsoever, they should be alert to campaign material which may find its way into provincial newspapers and where possible exert their influence to assure that equal space is provided all candidates.

5. (C) No printing of ballots or of literature for individual candidates will be performed by U.S. printing facilities or at U.S. expense. Election publicity of a general nature (e.g., posters urging potential voters to register or registered voters to cast their ballots) should not

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be printed on U.S. facilities or at U.S. expense without prior authorization from the appropriate Regional Director or his designee. (FYI: It is possible that U.S. facilities may be employed for the printing of election publicity materials suitable for nationwide distribution. Arrangements for such printing would be made by JUSPAO and the GVN Ministry of Information and Chieu Hoi. End FYI).

6. (C) Assistant Province Representatives for Psychological Operations should, however, insure that maximum use is made of local province radio and newspaper space, VIS cadre and "psy war" elements of the RD cadres in publicizing the elections and such specifics as the procedures for registering and voting. Where available in the field, those communications and information facilities such as amplification equipment, etc., which the United States has provided VIS, may be used in campaign activity provided all candidates enjoy equal access to them.

7. (C) Province Representatives and Assistant Province Representatives for Psychological Operations will be expected to render appropriate assistance to press and network representatives who visit their provinces in connection with election reporting, just as they would render assistance in other circumstances. Whenever practicable, the Mission Press Center will notify Province Representatives through MACV/CORDSD channels of impending visits by media representatives.

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